

Brian Lee may resume as Blues' manager

JOHN Reardon, a loyal servant of Wycombe Wanderers for the past nine years, was last week dismissed as team manager a month after his side had clinched third place in the Isthmian League Premier Division.

He received the news at a private meeting with two club officials last Tuesday night. There he was told that it was the feeling of the committee that he should leave the post.

The news of his dismissal inevitably leads to speculation about his successor and the name that invariably comes up is that of the former manager and current vice-chairman Brian Lee, who resigned two years ago because of pressure of work.

Mr Lee is the director of the Bisham Abbey national sports centre near Marlow, and was particularly busy at the time with the building of their large and impressive indoor sports hall.

With that hall now up and working successfully,

Story by MICHAEL KNOX

Mr Lee may now feel he has time to devote to the team, he led to four Isthmian League championships in five years in the early seventies.

His assistant for all of that time was Mr Reardon, who, like Lee, joined in 1969. When Mr Lee decided to step down, Wycombe appointed their former England Amateur international Ted Powell to the post and Mr Reardon seemed to have lost his chance of becoming Blues' manager.

POWELL SACKED

But in February of last year, Mr Powell made it known he had applied for a coaching job abroad which he subsequently got. On hearing of this application, Wycombe immediately sacked him.

Mr Reardon, who had loyally agreed to stay on as assistant under Mr Powell, was thus given the caretaker job until the end of the season. His results were so impressive in the latter part of the season — they missed the championship by a whisker — that he was appointed for last season.

Not many teams finishing third at the end of a season would get rid of their manager, but Wycombe

have set themselves such a high standard in the past decade that this was considered a relative failure.

Mr Reardon, who with Mr Lee helped to set up that reputation, came in for criticism during the season from fans because of the Blues' inability to score goals.

STRONG DEFENCE

It was argued that a manager with more contacts in football would be able to acquire a top-class striker who would turn their superiority into goals. These were certainly in short supply last season, and it was the strong defence that took Blues to their high placing.

I remember that after one game in which several of the older members of the squad played, a fan came up to Mr Reardon and asked him scathingly if he recruited his players from an old age pensioners home.

In addition to the high placing in the league, Blues also won the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup, but on the debit side they went out at an early stage in both the F.A. Trophy and F.A. Cup and threw away the Shaw and Kilburn Foodlit League championship with home defeats in the last two games.

After his dismissal Mr

Reardon issued the following statement:

"I was asked to attend Loakes Park on Tuesday night, when I was met by the chairman Reg Williams and secretary John Goldsworthy. Mr Williams said I had not been granted a further year's contract with the club.

TWO CHOICES

"I was given one of two choices. I could either resign because of pressure of work or not be given a further year's contract. Being a man who believed in the truth, I elected to do the latter.

"I wish the club continued success and hope the deal I clinched this week with Stewart Atkins of Chesham and the earlier signing of Steve Hardwick means I'm leaving the club in a stronger position than when I had been manager.

"My only misgiving is the manner of my leaving — being told by just two officials instead of the whole committee. It gave me little chance to leave the club in the way I would have preferred."

Mr Reardon went on to say he had enjoyed a long and happy association with the club and added that if he was being sacked for finishing third in the league and winning the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup, then a lot of other managers were in trouble.

He went on: "The club said they may contact me at a later date with regard to another post, but I declined. I've not yet decided about my future, but for the meantime I shall enjoy the rest."

It is ironic that during the moment of his dismissal he was signing up a striker, who could ease the problems in the future. Indeed he completed the signing of Stewart Atkins with the full approval of the club on Friday, three days after his sacking.

Club officials were tightlipped about the affair, refusing to comment on any aspect of the matter.

The full committee of the club met on Monday night and were saying nothing until after that meeting. Meanwhile the speculation goes on as to his successor.

WYCOMBE STAY TIGHT LIPPED

EVEN after last night's crucial committee meeting Wycombe Wanderers were unwilling to make any comment on the dismissal of John Reardon as manager — regardless of his possible replacement.

The many hundreds of people who watch Wycombe every week and regularly pay through the turnstiles will be disappointed that they are

not being kept informed about the future of their team.

'Silence is golden' goes the saying but in this case silence only leads to suspicion, rumour and speculation, little of which does Wycombe much credit.

It is surely better for Wanderers to say what they have to say in public, rather than keep it behind closed

doors, especially when it concerns a matter as important as this.

Brian Lee may or may not be the next manager, only the Wycombe committee know the answer, but it is surely right that a statement is forthcoming, if only to end the countless rumours, which are bound to exist in the present situation.